

WASHINGTON- Over the past several months, U.S. Rep. Harry Mitchell has heard from a broad coalition of Arizonans regarding health insurance reform in Congress. Mitchell has heard directly from thousands of constituents, including receiving over 26,000 calls, letters and emails, and has met with hundreds more including Valley business leaders, health care providers, seniors and families through multiple meetings, forums and community visits - in addition to 6,500 Arizona residents who completed his health insurance reform survey and nearly 30,000 folks who participated in three live telephone town halls.

Currently, rising premiums are hurting families, especially those with insurance. The average family policy now exceeds \$13,000 a year and is likely to increase to \$24,000 a year over the next decade. [Source: [New York Times, September 15, 2009](#)]

These costs include an estimated \$1,100 a year to cover the cost of the uninsured, who get treated at our emergency rooms, despite their inability to pay. [Source: [Seattle Times, September 8, 2009](#)]

Small businesses, which make up seventy-three percent of Arizona's businesses, are facing a crisis. Since 2000, insurance premiums have risen 130 percent, and are projected to rise another 15 percent next year. A premium costing \$4,500 per employee in 2008 will cost \$5,500 in 2010. [Source: [New York Times, October 24, 2009](#)]

With a vote on health insurance reform scheduled for later today, Mitchell has announced that he will vote to move a bill forward for further improvement in the Senate rather than to kill the prospect of advancing reform.

Below is a sample of some of the feedback and stories Mitchell has received in favor of the need for reform, in addition to a list of organizations in favor of reform:

DOCTORS

"Individuals, small businesses and medical providers deserve a level playing field with private insurers and the insurers need healthy competition. Every dollar spent on sky-rocketing premiums is a dollar not spent hiring, paying better or expanding production. My business and the 17,000 patients who depend on it cannot afford the status quo."

**Dr. Susan Wilder, Immediate Past President of the Arizona Academy of Family Physicians
Scottsdale**

"I believe there are many good provisions in the bill such as relieving barriers to coverage for those with preexisting conditions. I also believe there is more work to be done on other provisions and that is where the next efforts must take us - we must start somewhere. To do nothing is not an option and this bill before you is reasonable first steps."

**Ronald S. Fischler, MD, North Scottsdale Pediatrics: Scottsdale President Arizona Chapter American Academy of Pediatrics
Scottsdale**

"I have offered health insurance to all of our full time employees for the past 22 years in Arizona. Since BC/BS has raised our premium 29 percent in two years our clinic needs competition to help control these costs. Without reform my practice will have to stop giving the health insurance benefits to our employees."

**Statement from Marvin Borsand, D.O., FACOS, FAACS
Scottsdale**

"As a medical economist who has analyzed costs in this industry for 25 plus years, I commend Congress for taking on this issue. This legislation will provide increased competition among insurers and incentives for uninsured individuals and small employers to purchase a quality health plan at an affordable cost. Additionally, the options available will not exclude them for pre-existing conditions."

**Dr. Jerri Boswell, Clinical Associate Professor of Medicine, Arizona Health Sciences Center.
Scottsdale**

"If we do not fix what is broken with our health care system it will become unsustainable. More and more patients will lose their coverage every year and end up in the emergency room well after their illnesses could have been prevented. That will cause higher premiums for remaining patients with insurance which will in turn make it harder for them to keep their coverage."

Additionally, this bill is especially important to support vitally needed Urban and Community Health Centers in Arizona and elsewhere."

**Dr. Leland Fairbanks, Indian Health Service Family Physician
Tempe**

"As a physician and a constituent who has worked with underserved and uninsured populations for over 30 years as well as one who previously worked in the for-profit HMO world for several years, I want to strongly encourage you to support the health care legislation. I see the consequences every day to the uninsured people who are unable to get the care they need, the medications to control their diseases, or the preventive service to prevent illness for themselves or their children."

**Robert L. Elk, MD, MMM
Scottsdale**

"It is much more efficient and cheaper to provide primary care than it is to provide care for treatment of an illness. I am pleased to see that a medical home project has been included in HR 3962 and I encourage you to keep the process moving forward so that we can see health care reform that will help make our communities healthier."

Amy Shoptaugh, M.D., AZAAP, Board of Directors; Obesity Committee and Medical Home Committee

"Everyday in the emergency room I see patients who have jobs, work hard, but are still underinsured or have no coverage. Entire families go without care when they need it. Simple health issues go untreated, become major health crises and finally force them to come to the ER. We need to change the system so hard working families can have proper access to care."

**Linda Knutson, PA
Tempe**

SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS

"As an independent entrepreneur, the constant increases in insurance company rates have made affordable, quality health care way beyond my reach. Creating a new marketplace where insurance companies would be forced to compete for my business would allow me to purchase coverage at an affordable price. "

Linda Scherr, Scottsdale

"With the increasing cost of health insurance it is nearly impossible to cover my employees. A small business exchange would give me more insurance options and increased competition would help me offer coverage to my employees. We cannot afford to continue with the status quo."

Mike Jennings, Tempe

LOCAL GROUPS AND CONSTITUENT STORIES

"The proposal before Congress strengthens Medicare and benefits seniors. While no plan is perfect it is critical that seniors continue to receive all of the benefits that traditional Medicare provides. This plan closes the prescription drug donut hole while ensuring a stronger and more stable future for Medicare."

Dr. Len Kirschner, Chair, AARP Arizona

"Ensuring that all people in the United States have health care coverage is essential to moving toward a healthier and more productive society. In order for this to occur, there needs to be a fundamental change in the health care system - a move toward a system based on primary care. Health care reform that is built upon a model of people having ready access to primary care physicians for acute, chronic, and preventive care is critical for success."

Edward G. Paul, M.D., President, Arizona Academy of Family Physicians

"If healthcare reform fails - the Indian Health Care Improvement Act fails. That is why we need your help. A vote for HR 3962 is a vote for healthy Indian people. Please vote for H.R. 3962, to improve health care for Native American and all Americans. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration and respect for tribal self government."

Dr. Clinton Pattea, President, Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation

"We have been fighting for 10 years to get the Indian Health Care Improvement Act (IHCIA) passed... the IHCIA is the baseline for all health care for American Indians and Alaska Natives and it is unfortunate that it hasn't been modernized in 14 years. If health care reform fails - the Indian Health Care Improvement Act fails."

Diane Enos, President, Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community

"Health care reform needs to stop insurers from denying people with pre-existing conditions. I was diagnosed with epilepsy as a child and even though I haven't had any seizures since childhood and even after a coma eleven years ago, it is considered a pre-existing condition and insurance coverage is prohibitively expensive. My current full-time job as a care giver does not offer health care benefits and I am forced to go without coverage."

Lolita Ahmad, Fountain Hills

"I worked at a hardware store for years but had to drop my health coverage because the premiums became too expensive. Without insurance I couldn't have my heart condition treated properly and was eventually forced to the emergency room with complications that put me in a coma for more than a month. I was still in a coma when the medical bill collectors began calling. Eventually I had to spend down my assets in order to qualify for Medicaid to continue treatment. Please don't let these situations happen anymore."

John Drefus, Phoenix

HEALTH CARE EXPERTS

"It is essential for Congress to move a health care bill forward that would give small businesses and individuals an opportunity to purchase affordable, necessary coverage, prevent insurance companies from dropping folks when they get sick or discriminating against those with pre-existing conditions and enhance competition among insurers."

Beth Schermer, Coppersmith Schermer & Brockelman PLC
Phoenix

"This year we have a real opportunity for health care reform that we cannot let pass. Millions of Americans are paying higher costs, or have lost their coverage, since the last opportunity for reform. It is critical that we support the new collaborative bill to ensure that reform is successful this time."

Avein Saaty-Tafoya - CEO of Adelante Community Health Clinic
Phoenix

"This bill has the ability to fundamentally improve our health insurance system. Congress should continue to work to improve it and move it forward. It can help keep costs down by slowing the rate of growth and ensuring more people have access to health insurance."

Tara Plese, Arizona Association of Community Health Centers

NATIONAL GROUPS AND ASSOCIATIONS

"Concurrent passage of H.R. 3962 and H.R. 3961 represent a critical step in the legislative process that will enable further refinement of policies to lay a solid foundation for achieving our shared goal of assuring high-quality, affordable health care coverage for all Americans....The legislation eliminates pre-existing condition exclusions and lifetime limits on total spending, does not allow insurers to vary premiums based on health status, and expands choice and access to coverage for those who are self-insured or employed by small businesses."

American Medical Association

"Once again, the need for fundamental reform of the U.S. health care system is critical. Bold action is called for to create a health care system that is responsive to the needs of consumers and provides equal access to safe, high-quality care for all in a cost-effective manner."

American Nurses Association

"...we support provisions in the Affordable Health Care for America Act that will eliminate wasteful spending in Medicare and strengthen the solvency of the program. Contrary to the rhetoric heard from opponents, this bill does not cut Medicare; rather it includes provisions to ensure that we are receiving high-quality care and the best value for our Medicare dollars."

National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare

"The bill protects all benefits in the traditional Medicare program and, by reducing waste and excess payments, achieves savings that will help strengthen Medicare's long-term financing. In addition to improving drug coverage under Medicare Part D, the legislation allows Medicare to negotiate with drug makers for lower drug prices... As the legislative process moves forward, we encourage you to consider additional improvements to this bill."

American Association of Retired People (AARP)

"As the leading voice of patients in the debate, we continue to call on Congress to put aside politics and pass health care reform that will save lives this year. The status quo is too costly for cancer patients, who often are forced not only to fight for their lives, but also for their life savings."

Robert E. Youle, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, Board of Directors' Volunteer Chair and cancer survivor

"The House health reform bill...reflects further progress toward a reformed health care system anchored by meaningful coverage for virtually all Americans. The bill achieves a threshold level of coverage that is essential for effective and durable reform. Equally important is maintaining a market-based health care system, and we are pleased that the bill moves in this direction."

Federation of American Hospitals

"In conclusion, the American College of Physicians believes that H.R. 3962 has the key policies needed to make health insurance coverage affordable for almost all Americans, to begin to re-align federal policies to support primary care, prevention and wellness, and to reform delivery and payment systems to create better value for patients."

American College of Physicians

Additionally, the following groups and organizations representing millions of doctors, patients, seniors and families support advancing reform:

Alliance for Retired Americans

American Academy of Family Physicians

American Academy of Pediatrics

American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy

American Association of Nurse Anesthetists

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

American College of Physicians

**American College of Surgeons
American Hospital Association
American Mental Health Counselors Association
American Nurses Association
American Osteopathic Association
Association of American Medical Colleges
Consumers Union, Publisher of Consumer Reports
Easter Seals
Families USA
Mental Health America
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association of Community Health Centers (NACHC)
National Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems
National Association of Social Workers
National Breast Cancer Coalition
National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare
National Patient Advocate Foundation
National Spinal Cord Injury Association
Small Business Majority
United Cerebral Palsy
United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society
United Spinal Association
U.S. Women's Chamber of Commerce**